WORLD CHRONICLE

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SYNOPSIS

U.N. Support for Namibia's Nation-Building Exercise

David McAdams, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Namibia, discusses the essential needs of this newly-independent country's nation-building exercise, and how the Agency plans to assist in this effort.

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VOICE From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is World Chronicle, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's World Chronicle.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns and this is WORLD CHRONICLE.

On March the 21st of 1990, Namibia joined the world community as a newly independent state of Southern Africa. The United Nations, having played a vital role in bringing Namibia from colonial status to nationhood, is now extending full support to Namibia's nation-building exercise. The United Nations Development Programme, or UNDP, has already committed $10.6 million for the next two years to help in training, technology transfer and rallying of outside donor funding for the new African country.

Our guest today, David McAdams of the United States, is UNDP's first Resident Representative in Namibia. A veteran senior officer and African specialist, Mr. McAdams co-ordinated all UN assistance activities in Namibia during the 1989/1990 transition to independence. Mr. McAdams will be interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by: Ted Morello of the Christian Science Monitor; Obi Emekekwue of the News Agency of Nigeria; and Ian Steele of the Press Foundation of Asia.

For some background information, here's a report from our correspondent, Steve Whitehouse:

PEREZ DE CUELLAR: "I wish to pledge the full support of the United Nations to Namibia in the challenging task of nation-building."

WHITEHOUSE: Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, declares a new role for the United Nations in Namibia -- development.

In this largely desert country, water is a precious resource. Farming is of critical importance. It provides a livelihood for a majority of the Territory's more than one million people. It's likely to be one of the new Government's highest priorities, according to the Chief of the UN Development Programme in Namibia, David McAdams ....

McADAMS: "As far as agriculture is concerned, we know and believe and the Government believes that this is one of the primary sources of employment and also for self-reliance in food production. Therefore they are giving primary priority to this area, particularly as it relates to the creation of jobs."

WHITEHOUSE: Here in Caprivi, Northern Namibia, recently returned refugees have planted early this season and are harvesting a bumper crop. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization, or FAO, has identified crop varieties best suited for planting. It means Namibian returnees are better able to reintegrate into the local economy.

Maize is a major local crop in the Caprivi. FAO helps farmers get started with high yield maize and also with rice and other staples. The aim is to make the country self-reliant in food.

Fishing will also play an important role in Namibia's future economy. The coastline is rich in nutrients and is one of the best fishing areas in the world. However, since an exclusive economic zone has not yet been claimed by Namibia, fishing fleets from other countries ship away about a million tons of catch a year. Local overfishing is also depleting the stock.

A research project is now underway on board a Norwegian vessel to determine the general state of marine resources. Funded jointly by UNDP, FAO and the Norwegian Government, the survey vessel includes Namibian scientists who participate to gain experience. The government someday hopes it will have its own research ship to follow up on the findings of the Norwegians.

Research will enable the establishment of fishing quotas. This way optimum production can be assured while preserving much of the resource for the future. An early task for the new government will be to assert control over its Exclusive Economic Ocean Zone. Fishing is just one area in which United Nations and other aid organizations are expected to play a valuable role in the newly-independent Namibia's development plans.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. McAdams, we haven't mentioned in the introduction that Namibia was formerly ruled by South Africa and before that it was of course a German colony, is the United Nations looking to South Africa to help at all in the development of this new nation and perhaps also to the German state?

McADAMS: Well, I think the decision as to whether the United Nations is looking or whether the Government is looking -- we can make a distinction -- I would presume that South Africa is expected to contribute, certainly in the area of the repayment of the debt which was encumbered by the Namibian authorities during their colonial rule.

LITTLEJOHNS: What was this debt for, Mr. McAdams?

McADAMS: It was basically operating debt for the functioning of the public services. Over the past eight years there's been roughly an annual deficit in the operating budget of the government of about $200 million. The money to cover that gap either came from direct subsidies or from the capital market in South Africa or overseas loans which were guaranteed by the South African government. That's all over now.

LITTLEJOHNS: The UNDP as we've said has committed $10.6 million. $10.6 million doesn't go very far these days, what is the ultimate target?

McADAMS: Normally we have five-year programming cycles and the end of that cycle is in 1991. At the end of '91 we'll be starting a new programming cycle and based on our very complicated formula I would hope that Namibia would get about $15 million for the five-year period. We have larger targets based on a special trust fund that was created for Namibia for which we had a target of $25 million. We so far have raised approximately $4.2 million.

LITTLEJOHNS: What is the infrastructure like in Namibia? Is it fairly developed?

McADAMS: I would say, based on my own experience in Africa and what other people say, it has probably one of the most advanced infrastructures and roads, communications, energy distribution on the continent.

LITTLEJOHNS: Where do they get their electricity from?

McADAMS: Their electricity comes primarily from hydroelectric sources and thermal sources ...

LITTLEJOHNS: Within the country?

McADAMS: Within the country and some from outside the country. Some is based on production in the Rcuacana complex which is on the Kunene river which borders between Namibia and Angola, some comes from the Northern Cape, from South Africa.

LITTLEJOHNS: Are they into solar energy as well?

McADAMS: Very little but certainly they're into it.

LITTLEJOHNS: There's a potential there I guess?

McADAMS: Yes, for home use and you find that some rural hospitals and clinics that were built in the last 10 or 15 years will have solar complexes for hot water in particular.

MORELLO: Mr. McAdams, one of the issues that have come up since the events in Europe began last fall has been concern among the Third World countries about the diversion or the possible diversion of assistance from say traditional donor countries to the Eastern European countries to the detriment, specifically in Africa. The Secretary-General has voiced his concerns, President Garba of the General Assembly has and most

recently Prime Minister Geingob of Namibia has. He was asked whether he was concerned and his answer was, "Very much so". My question then is how optimistic are you about being able to raise the funds that are needed? You mentioned for example that you had a target of $25 million for the trust fund and only four point some million from only three countries as I recall -- Finland, Belgium and somebody else....

McADAMS: It's Norway.

MORELLO: ... Norway right. Given those rather disappointing statistics up to this point on what will you base any optimism that you might have?

McADAMS: Well, I would base it on the fact that we haven't really canvassed that many donors intensively. There are places like Japan that have not been tapped.

MORELLO: Have you had indication from Japan for instance that they might? Surely you must have made some kind of a sampling of thinking?

McADAMS: We haven't at the very highest level but we do plan to assist the government in organizing a mission of very senior officials to a number of countries in Asia, in the Persian Gulf, in Europe and in North America in the next two or three weeks in order to prepare for the donor conference which is scheduled for mid-year and I am sure that there is interest there. We have seen that some 35 countries had observer missions resident in Namibia prior to the elections and they are still there. Many of these countries I think are interested.

MORELLO: Mr. Draper, the Administrator of UNDP has said that one of the major challenges facing Namibia, the way he put it, was a steady flow of wellwishers bearing gifts. Now this suggests to me in any case that he was talking about the absorption capacity of Namibia. How great is that capacity?

McADAMS: I think it's certainly greater in the sense that the management capabilities of actually delivering inputs for projects, to accomplish disbursements are there. For example take the water sector. Namibia is a country where water is very critical and it's a very dry and arid country so you have many deep bore holes. These bore holes have to be serviced. Traditionally this has all been done through the private sector, it's not a state operation. You have about 100 engineers that are resident there, that are in the private sector, some of them in the government, so that if you wanted to assist in expanding this particular service you could do it much quicker there than possibly in some of the other countries in the sub-region.

EMEKEKWUE: Mr. McAdams, the Namibian government has indicated an interest in establishing a central bank, now what kind of assistance is the UNDP giving to the country in trying to establish this central bank?

McADAMS: Well, in this connexion there's been a joint effort on the part of UNDP and the IMF. The IMF has carried out initially a mission last October to establish what the requirements were and the procedures. The Government subsequently, after Independence, formally requested UNDP and the IMF to proceed with the recruitment of these technical assistance people which we are jointly financing with the IMF

who will constitute the senior staff of the central bank. In other words the Government gives highest priority to establishing the bank as quickly as possible.

EMEKEKWUE: What role do you see the central bank playing in reducing the dependence of the Namibian economy on South Africa?

McADAMS: First they'll manage whatever currency policy and monetary policy and the management and control of the banks and the bank rules will be theirs. Presently Namibia's monetary activities is an agency from the Reserve Bank of Pretoria. This is not a very sovereign kind of situation. Eventually I think the Government has indicated that they would prefer to have their own currency also that separately they may be part of the South African Customs Union and they are rather rational in their approach. They think that it will take maybe 24-36 months.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is **WORLD CHRONICLE**. Our guest is David McAdams, UNDP Resident Representative in Namibia.

STEELE: Mr. McAdams, you mentioned the quality of the infrastructure that Namibia has and has left, what was the relative investment in human resources because ultimately it's the Namibians who will have to pick up the ball and take charge of what they have. Has there been a commensurate investment in human resources or is this one of the sore points as you make the transition?

McADAMS: Well, you can say categorically there hasn't been the commensurate investment in human resources. For example, you know Namibia was divided into 11 ethnic communities or administrations, each one having its own separate school

system and the expenditure by government per student in the white administration was ten times per student in the Ovambo administration for example.

STEELE: Well this of course raises the question of what will happen when the South Africans and resident whites who are largely predicted to leave the country, what will happen then? Who will fill those places? We've seen a very heavy input from the United Nations and agencies at this point but the country presumably won't want to run on expatriate labour for any longer than is absolutely necessary. Do you have any projections on how the transition is likely to flow from this point?

McADAMS: First, when I went to Namibia for the first time last April I had to revise my definition of what an expatriate was because Namibia is a country of whites, blacks, yellow people, brown people. If they call themselves Namibian, they consider themselves Namibian, you have to accept that. I think under the constitution, under present laws they have to give some option in the near future so that many whites in the Administration, and this was one of the preoccupations we had when we went there last year in terms of trying to establish some kind of benchmark of manpower needs. I didn't meet any civil servant, and I still haven't, who actually said they intended to leave. As you know, in 1978 the white population was roughly about 100,000 right now it's about 80,000 and since 1978 until Independence there has been a drop but most people say that those who wanted to leave have already left so that there is no evidence that there will be a massive exodus of persons, but the constitution also calls on and requires the Government to establish a balance. In other words they have to initiate an affirmative action programme to give a balanced representation in public services and in access to public services.

STEELE: How many United Nations personnel have followed the path through Independence into the last months of the newly independent nation and how many of those people are likely to stay there for the long term?

McADAMS: Not very many because they came and were selected for a specific -- you said United Nations personnel -- they were selected primarily in the context of UNTAG's operation and the UNTAG people have mostly left. There is a small group of about 20-30 there however. You may be aware that the Namibian government established bilateral agreements with a certain number of countries for very specific tasks, particularly say Kenya in helping training the army and the police and one or two other countries but basically the UN agencies staff that were there -- World Food Programme, UNFPA ....

LITTLEJOHNS: United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

McADAMS: .... yes and WHO and UNHCR, the High Commissioner for Refugees, they have staffs that are there. I think we're probably altogether about 90.

MORELLO: Mr. McAdams, the question of the population, 1.7 million I think is the figure you gave for the total country, this is not much of a population however one social scientist has suggested that the population of Windhoek itself could double in a relatively short time because of the economic situation in other parts of the country, the inflow to the urban areas, is that going to be one of the major problems for the UN Population Fund?

McADAMS: Well, not just for the Population Fund but also for the Minister of Housing and Local Government who I know personally is very much preoccupied with what is happening in for example Katatura which is one of the former townships -- it's now been incorporated into the municipality of Windhoek-- where the population in the past couple of years has gone from about 30,000 to 100,000 and it wasn't built ...

LITTLEJOHNS: In the past couple of years?

McADAMS: Yes.

MORELLO: It's a migration from the rural areas?

McADAMS: Migration from the rural areas, returnees, also from outside of the country, have created extreme pressures on I guess even the temperament of the people who live under those conditions and other economic pulls are attracting people. There's a place in the city about 60-70 kilometres from Windhoek called Okahandja and just outside of Okahandja there is a farm and the farmer on that farm he rents space to people and it's called 5 Rand because that's what it costs a month. And what services does he provides? Water. The rest of it is a shack in the squatters zone so this issue has to be addressed. Now in terms of population growth I would say that UNFPA as well as WHO will probably in the initial stage assist with maternal child health. As you know the general strategy is if you can assure that the children born are going to live then you can begin to do family spacing.

EMEKEKWUE: Mr. McAdams, what is the likely impact on the Namibian economy when the country takes over Walvis Bay?

McADAMS: Well I don't know when they'll take over Walvis Bay formally or not but the fishing industry is one of the major renewable resources of the country, both from the potential of job creation and from the potential of revenues from royalties and from joint ventures eventually with other shipping and fishing companies. A recent article in the Spanish newspaper underlined that 50,000 jobs in Spain depend on the annual catch that they get from Namibian waters so it's an extremely important resource and it's extremely important that the Walvis Bay issue be resolved.

LITTLEJOHNS: I think we should explain Mr. McAdams that Walvis Bay is a deep water port which is retained by South Africa, at least for the time being, and I suppose it's something which will be negotiated at some point whether it should pass to Namibian control.

McADAMS: Not whether but when.

EMEKEKWUE: I'm just wondering if the extension of the economic zone also goes ahead as planned will it also have the same kind of impact, do you think?

McADAMS: Well, there are two aspects. Earlier in the show we talked about this Norwegian research vessel that the UNDP/FAO and the Norwegian Government has commissioned to do a detailed study over a period of a year of the resources at all depths, both coastal and off-shore, because this area has been plundered so heavily in the past 10-15 years that in order to restore the base as it should be there may be a requirement for a moratorium but I can assure you that the fishermen tell me, and I was there about ten days ago, that since Independence many of these trawlers in the 200-mile zone are withdrawn and since they're not trawling at mid-levels, not just on the surface but

at mid-levels, inland the trawlers are catching enormous catches -- this is Namibian trawlers -- that they haven't had for three or four years. They send their boats out and they come back in three hours and they send them out another time and maybe three or four times where before it took 12 hours.

STEELE: We've seen the euphoria of the new nation, can that be sustained? Isn't there a risk in the short-term at least that the people will be disappointed, that economic and social progress simply won't come in one big package and it won't come fast enough?

McADAMS: Well, I think the Government is quite conscious of this and they are emphasizing reconciliation which is very important, after all there was a war going on for 23 years. Secondly, they have urged all the sources of assistance to respond to their priorities. For example we have begun to bring in UN volunteers -- doctors and teachers -- to replace South African Defence Force personnel who were performing these tasks and in the areas that they are being assigned are the areas where they are most needed.

STEELE: This is a change in operation for UNDP? You traditionally look at the long-term. Namibia has a lot of very near-term needs, is this a special case within the framework of the UN agencies at this particular time?

McADAMS: I think this is a special case and in terms of the priorities of the Government to respond to immediate needs. For example we talked earlier about the infrastructure, even the Government's own strategy is to maintain essential services, at least to the present level, and to maintain the infrastructure. That's a very important part of what they will be requesting at the donor conference.

STEELE: UNDP was also somewhat unique in that you had a running start in Namibia. You were there 14 years ago, you were there in '76. Is there anything very much to show for those early 14 years? Were they good years, did they produce anything which has really given you an effective start now that you've entered the Independence mode?

McADAMS: We were there but not inside Namibia. We were there in terms of providing humanitarian assistance to SWAPO ...

STEELE: Training some of those people who are coming back now?

McADAMS: ... in training and the rewards are there. Initially they asked us for I think 11 air traffic controllers last September. We eventually only furnished two because they were able to hire a number of Namibians, including those that had been trained by the UNDP and the Council for Namibia.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. McAdams, you've had considerable experience in Africa would you say that Namibia's chances are better than they have been in some other parts of the continent that you've worked in?

McADAMS: I think Namibia starts with a lead in a sense in terms of the future chances because of this infrastructure, because of a large number of trained Namibians who have remained and a large number who are arriving.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. McAdams, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE.**

Our guest has been David McAdams, UNDP Resident Representative in Namibia. He was interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by: Ted Morello of the Christian Science Monitor; Obi Emekekwue of the News Agency of Nigeria; and Ian Steele of the Press Foundation of Asia.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

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Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **WORLD CHRONICLE**, United Nations, Room S-837, New York, New York 10017, USA.

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